

ONE HUNDRED TENTH CONGRESS

## Congress of the United States

### House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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June 28, 2007

The Honorable Henry Waxman  
Chairman  
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This is to request the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform convene a hearing to examine steps taken to address shortcomings in federal disaster response identified by the Select Bipartisan Committee to Investigate the Preparation for and Response to Hurricane Katrina.

The February 2006 Select Committee report, entitled "A Failure of Initiative," concluded substantial improvements were needed in many organizational structures, decision-making procedures, resource policies, logistics systems and inter-agency protocols to improve emergency response. Correcting those systemic organizational deficiencies requires sustained initiative by federal departments and agencies. And we should show the same initiative in conducting timely oversight of what is being done to improve disaster response.

This year's hurricane season is upon us, and the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform needs to ask: What changes have been made to the National Response Plan? Have communications capabilities and interoperability between responders been improved? Is the federal government in a better position today to respond to large scale disasters than it was in August 2005? Recent questions have been raised about states' readiness to respond, specifically with regard to National Guard units. Questions also have been raised whether improvements made at FEMA have adequately addressed contract reforms, specifically regarding the purchase of trailers and temporary housing. Recent press reports described personnel and resource shortcomings affecting the ability of hospitals to provide medical care and treatment during large-scale emergencies. Given our Committee's broad jurisdiction over all federal government operations and our unique purview over intergovernmental relationships, a hearing would give us the opportunity to hear from local, state and national emergency response officials on these pressing issues.

*Hon. Henry A. Waxman*

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As chairman of the Select Committee, I tried to let the facts guide our work and I believe strongly the Committee's key findings continue to provide essential benchmarks against which we can judge critical response programs and capabilities today. Please, let's not wait for the next Category 4 hurricane or mass-casualty disaster to focus on the lessons Katrina still has to teach. I hope we can agree a hearing on government programs and policies affecting the lives and safety of millions of Americans is as worthy of our time and attention as many of the other topics on the Committee's current calendar.

Your consideration of this request is appreciated and I stand to ready to answer any questions you might have.

Sincerely,



Tom Davis

Ranking Republican Member